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## LEVEL DESIGN PORTFOLIO

Tomb Raider: Underworld (Wii / PS2) – Southern Mexico: Belt Room



*This unit was exclusive to the Wii and PS2 versions of Tomb Raider: Underworld. It only shared an objective, cinematics, and the giant statue imagery with its HD cousin.*

### THE STORY SO FAR

Earlier, Lara uncovered an entrance to the underworld known as Xibalba, and passed several tests designed by ancient, evil gods. Though trapped deep underground, she has reached the treasure they were protecting: the belt of Thor.

### CREATIVE DIRECTION

Lara's objective is an ancient, magical artifact of immense power, and this unit needs to capture a sense of ritual and dynasty. Because the player has just spent a lot of time dodging violent traps, all while mapping the nested layout of this mad underworld, we should slow down the pace, and allow them to tackle it at their own speed. We want to capture the sensation of finding a long-locked attic and having the liberty to explore it at will, with an occasional jolt of surprise from enemies so they don't get complacent or bored.

### MYTHOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Players don't know it yet, but the end goal of Underworld is for Lara to prevent Ragnarök, the end of the world as described in Norse mythology. According to legend, Jörmungandr the World Serpent will rise from the ocean to poison the sky. Thor will kill the beast, then succumb to its poison and die.

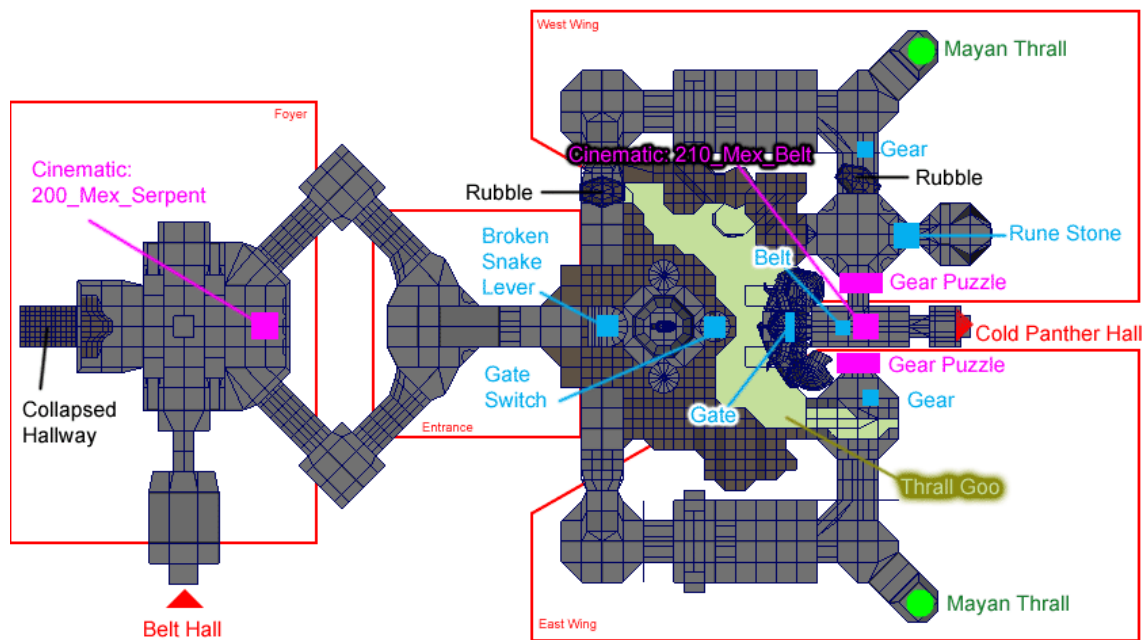
### PUZZLE DIRECTION

To engage in a bit of leitmotif, we will build the mythology into the main puzzle. The statue of Thor holds the belt at his heart, where it is guarded by a gate. A lever lowers the gate, but also raises Jörmungandr, who is poised to strike. "Thor" responds by raising his hammer, blocked his heart and the belt. The player must "defeat" Jörmungandr so the hammer is lowered, and access to the belt is attained.

### DESIGN DIRECTION

Create the space as if it was a holy temple: a symmetrical space used for ritual, with corridors and passages that priests might use. This lets players mentally map the area somewhat easily. Then, as befits an underground cavern that has suffered untold eons of tectonic shifts, damage it with fallen rocks, pillars, and crevasses to create "broken symmetry" that Lara must traverse.

## OVERVIEW



### UNIT SUMMARY

Lara enters from the Belt Hall unit, dropping down from a very tall ledge that prevents her from going back. The player triggers an in-game cinematic where Lara describes the legend of the World Serpent. After acquiring the belt, Lara is able to move the Rune Stone which blocks the exit to Cold Panther Hall.

### DESIGN SUMMARY

#### Traversal

- Ledge
- Ladder

#### Interactions

- Grapple Pull
- Push/pull Rune Object
- Push Rotating Lever
- Gear Puzzle East
- Gear Puzzle West

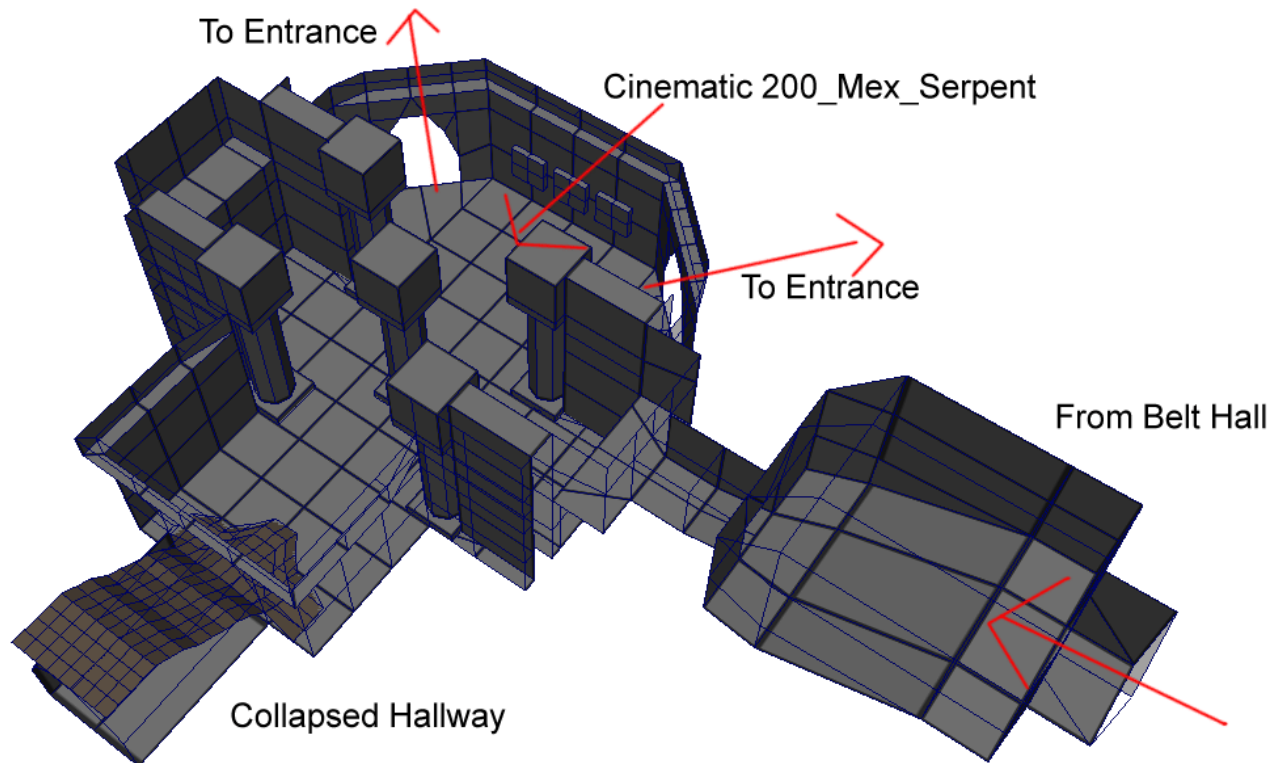
#### Enemies

- Mayan Thrall

### CHECKPOINTS

Progress will be automatically saved at certain points in the playthrough. They are described in each section.

## FOYER



### DESCRIPTION

Lara drops in from the ventilation shaft leading to Belt Hall, and finds herself in an ancient foyer. It is cold and dark. A collapsed hallway stops progress on the left, but on the right are two ramps leading up, and a triptych that describes the confrontation between Jörmungandr and Thor. The in-game cinematic 200\_Mex\_Serpent, where Lara describes the scene, is triggered when she approaches.

#### Traversal

- Ledge

#### Interactions

- None

#### Enemies

- None

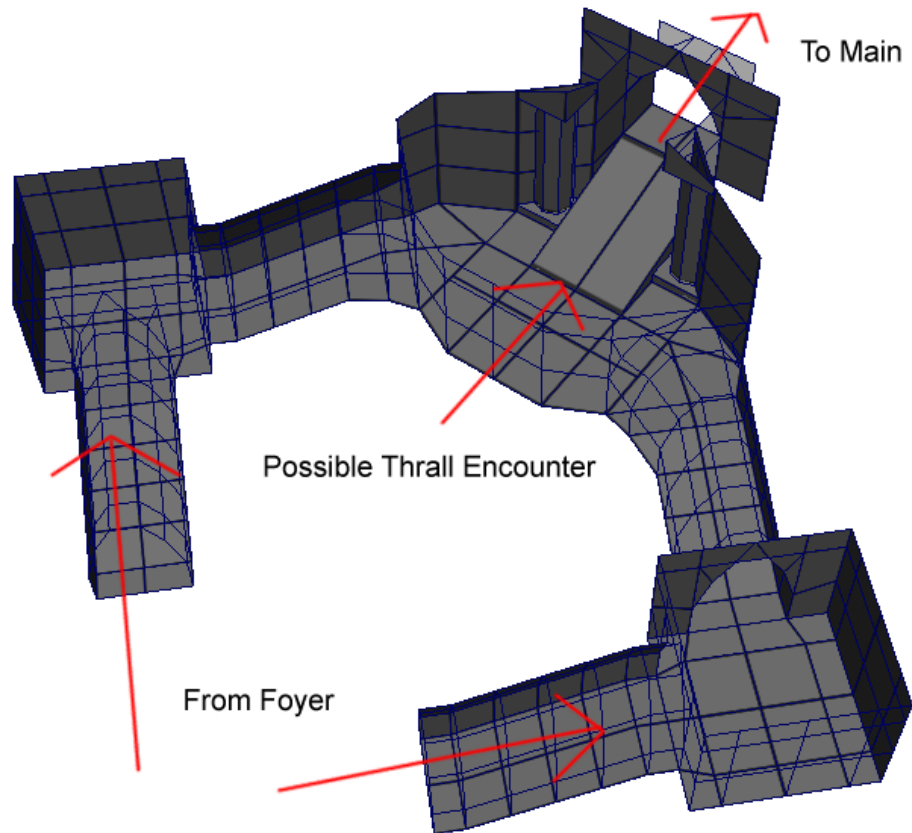
#### Checkpoints

- After the cinematic

### TECH NOTE

The unit L4\_Belt\_Hall can be completely unloaded from memory once Lara drops down.

## ENTRANCE



### DESCRIPTION

Lara comes up one of two identical ramps to the entrance room. It is designed to make the player's eyes sweep up and across the statue of Thor as they enter the main room. It also blocks visibility between the Foyer and Main.

#### Traversal

- None

#### Interactions

- None

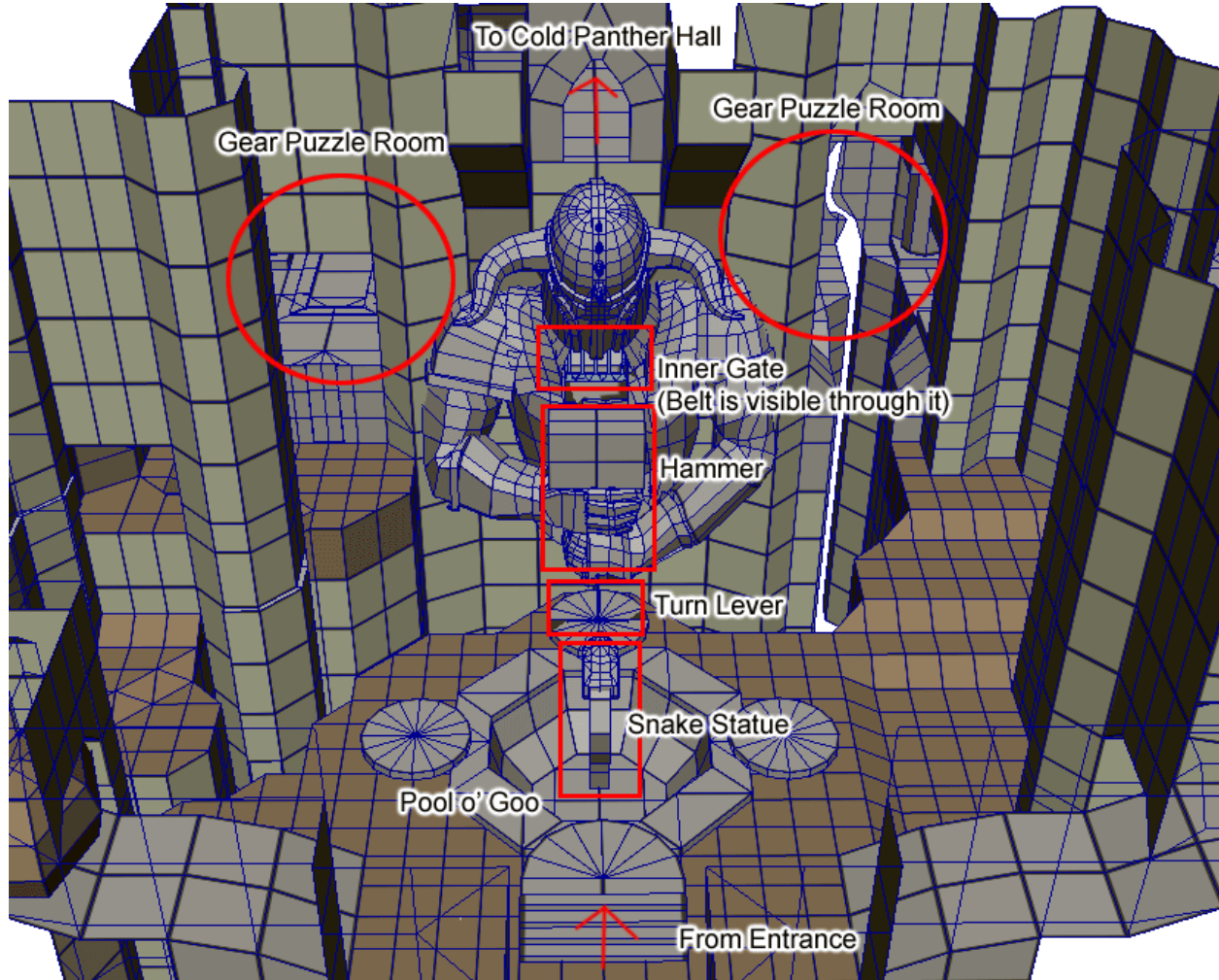
#### Enemies

- None

#### Checkpoints

- None

## MAIN



### DESCRIPTION

A giant statue of Thor holds the belt in its chest. It is blocked by a see-through gate. Lara must fix the Gear Puzzles in the East and West Wings, then rotate the lever to drop the gate. This triggers the next stage of the puzzle, where the Snake statue rises from the goo pool, and the Hammer rises to “protect” the belt. Lara must use her grapple to pull back the snake statue's head, symbolically killing it. This makes the snake lower back into the goo pool and lowers the hammer. Lara climbs inside to get the belt. Cinematic 210\_Mex\_Belt plays, then she is free to exit the level via the West Wing.

#### Traversal

- Ledges

#### Interactions

- Push Rotating Lever
- Grapple Pull

#### Enemies

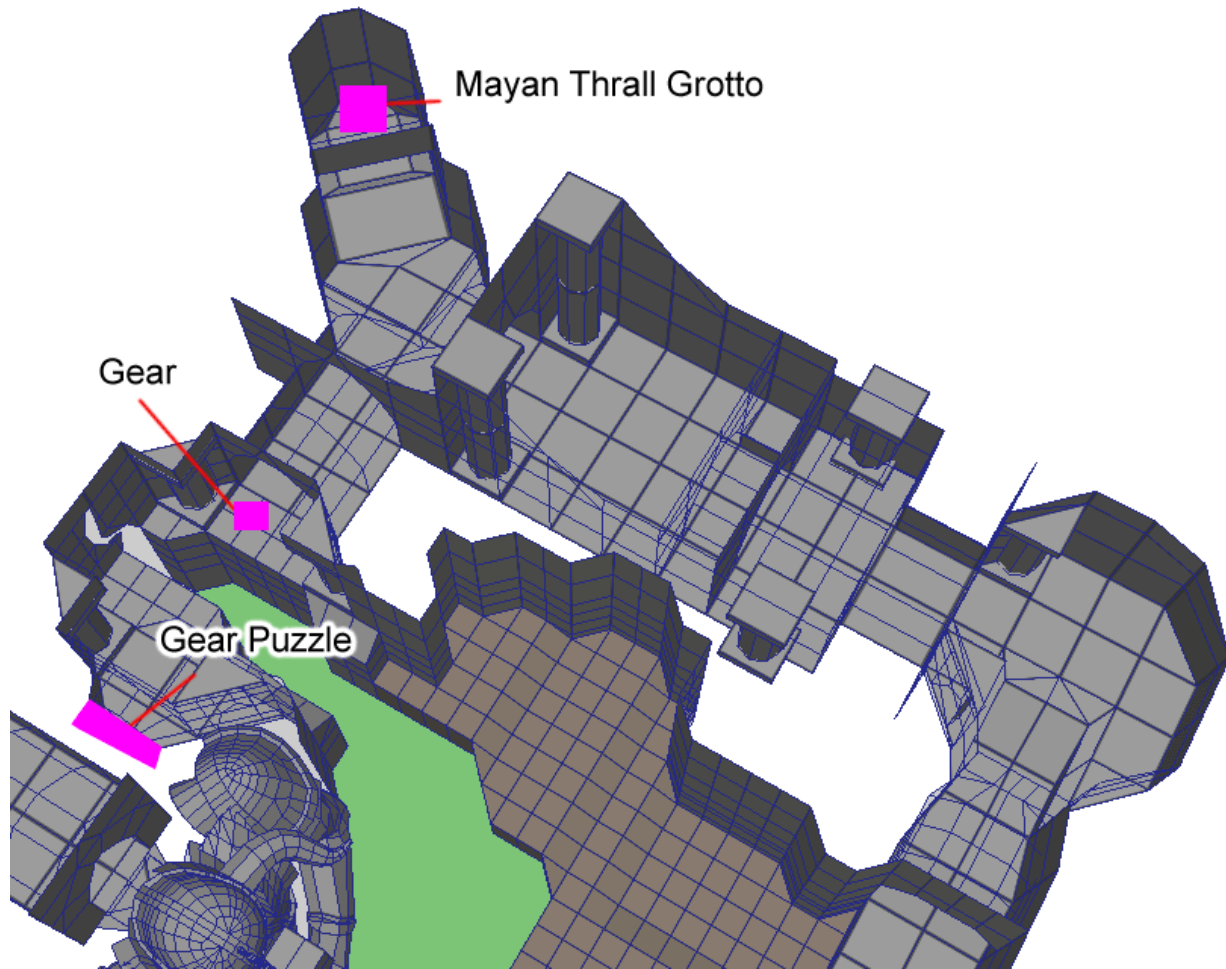
- None

#### Checkpoints

- After camera flythrough
- After snake rises
- After snake is “killed”
- After in-game cinematic



## EAST WING



### DESCRIPTION

Lara must pick up the gear on the floor, fix the Gear Puzzle, and solve it. It can only be accessed by going through the hallway.

#### Traversal

- None

#### Interactions

- Gear Puzzle East

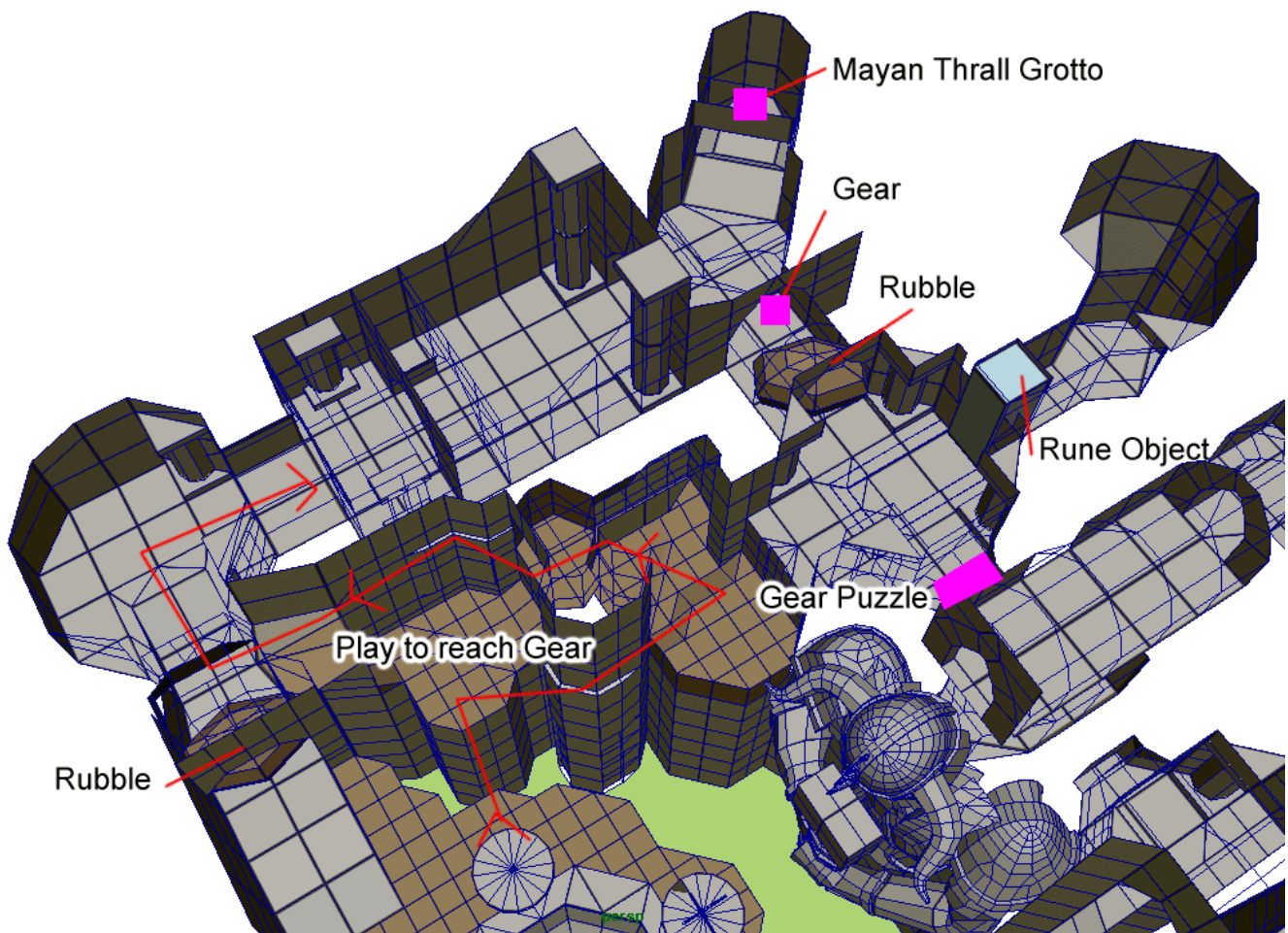
#### Enemies

- Mayan Thrall

#### Checkpoints

- After solving the Gear Puzzle

## WEST WING



### DESCRIPTION

Lara must leap over the dangerous goo canyon and traverse ledges to reach the hallway. There she fights a Mayan Thrall and picks up a gear. The Gear Puzzle is can be seen, but access is blocked by rubble. Lara must return the way she came, then climb a ladder to reach it.

After acquiring Thor's Belt, Lara returns to this area, and pushes the Rune Object into the hidden alcove. She then climbs a ladder that leads to the exit, leading to Cold Panther Hall.

#### Traversal

- Ledges
- Ladder

#### Interactions

- Gear Puzzle West
- Push/Pull Rune Object

#### Enemies

- Mayan Thrall

#### Checkpoints

- After solving the Gear Puzzle